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## Can I Still Eat This?

Food poisoning, also called foodborne illness, causes fever, muscle aches, abdominal pain, diarrhea, nausea and vomiting. Food poisoning is caused by harmful organisms such as bacteria or toxins in contaminated foods. It may be difficult to tell if a food is dangerous to eat because bacteria generally do not change the taste, smell or appearance of food.

Fortunately, most cases of food poisoning can be prevented with proper food handling—preparation, cooking and storing.

To practice food safety, quickly refrigerate perishable foods such as meat, poultry, fish, dairy and eggs. Don't let them sit more than two hours at room temperature or more than one hour at temperatures above 90 degrees F (32 degrees C). Uncooked foods, such as cold salads or sandwiches, should be eaten or refrigerated promptly. The goal is to minimize the time that food is in the "danger zone" — between 40 degrees F (4 degrees C) and 140 degrees F (60 degrees C) — when bacteria quickly multiply.

Reheat leftovers until the internal temperature reaches 165 degrees F (74 degrees C) before eating. Slow cookers and chafing dishes are not recommended for reheating leftovers because they may not get hot enough. A few commonly asked questions are:

### How long can you safely keep leftovers in the refrigerator?

Refrigerated leftovers should be eaten within four days to reduce the risk of food poisoning. Freeze leftovers immediately if you anticipate not being able to eat them within four days.

### Is it safe to eat leftover food that was left out on the counter to cool at dinnertime, then forgotten until morning? Will additional cooking kill the bacteria that may have grown?

No! Bacteria exist everywhere in nature, in the soil, air, water and the foods we eat. When bacteria have nutrients (food), moisture and favorable temperatures, they grow rapidly, increasing in numbers to the point where some types of bacteria can cause illness. Some bacteria double in numbers in as little as 20 minutes. Some bacteria produce toxins that are not destroyed by cooking.

### Is it safe to refreeze food that has thawed completely?

It is safe to refreeze food without cooking if thawed in the refrigerator, although there may be a loss of quality due to the moisture lost through defrosting. It is safe to freeze foods after cooking that were previously frozen raw. Unused portions of previously cooked foods that were thawed in the refrigerator may be refrozen.

### Should food sit on the range until it cools, or should it be refrigerated hot?

Hot food can be placed directly in the refrigerator or it can be rapidly chilled in an ice or cold water bath before refrigerating. Cover foods to retain moisture and to prevent picking up odors from other foods.

### How can I safely transport perishable foods to an outdoor event?

Items that don't require refrigeration include fruits, vegetables, hard cheese, canned meat or fish, chips, bread, crackers, peanut butter, jelly, mustard, and pickles. You don't need to pack them in a cooler. After estimating the amount of food that needs to be kept cold, pack an insulated cooler with sufficient ice or gel packs to keep the food at 40 degrees F. Pack food right from the refrigerator or freezer.

**Remember, keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold until ready to eat or refrigerate/freeze!**

*Some data taken from the USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service*

If you have questions, comments, or a topic you would like to see addressed:  
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## Did YOU Know

### Proposed Cybercrime Crackdown

In mid-May, the Obama administration called on Congress to expand the definition of computer crime and to stiffen federal penalties for hacking into computer systems. This includes doubling the maximum prison sentences for first-time offenses. The proposal was timely in that it came soon after high-profile data breaches at Sony and RSA, a network security firm.

The current Computer Fraud and Abuse Act states that unauthorized intrusion into a government computer system, however trivial, merits a maximum sentence of one year; theft of more than \$5,000 using a computer, five years; a first-time offense of jeopardizing national security via hacking, 10 years; and multiple offenses, 20 years.

The White House proposal would raise the maximum sentence for each first-time offense. Breaking into a government computer would go from one to three years, theft of more than \$5,000 could come with 10 years and the maximum for a first-time jeopardizing of national security would be 20 years.

Note: Most cellular phones are now classified as computer devices.